

VZCZCXR00365
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHNH RUEHTRO
DE RUEHGO #0008/01 0060701
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 060701Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8509
INFO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1693
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5171
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 8767
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6339
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1972
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2161
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 000008

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/06/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: BURMA: NLD VICE-CHAIR U TIN OO'S SPOUSE DISCUSSES
HOUSE ARREST, NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

RANGOON 00000008 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: P/E Chief Jennifer Harhigh for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Poloff met December 24 with Dr. Tin Moe Wai, the wife of detained National League for Democracy (NLD) Vice-chairman U Tin Oo. She said her husband is generally in good health but requires daily medications. She asked for USG assistance to help the couple's son, living in Japan, to send his father necessary medication. Dr. Tin Moe Wai maintains limited contact with the NLD, despite close surveillance by Special Branch.

Conditions of House Arrest

¶2. (C) Dr. Tin Moe Wai noted it has been a long time since she last met with a U.S. Embassy official. She told us she lives with her 81 year-old husband, who has been detained since 2003 and under house arrest since 2004. Two other relatives--her daughter-in-law and grandson--also live with the couple. The couple's only son is currently living in Japan. All family members living on the compound, with the exception of U Tin Oo, freely come and go from the property. The house is guarded by 6 or 7 police, including one member of Special Branch.

¶3. (SBU) U Tin Oo (formerly General Tin Oo) was Commander-in-Chief and the Defense Minister from 1974 to 1976. He was accused of petty corruption, among other charges, and subsequently dismissed. He became Vice-Chairman of the NLD in September 1988. He was imprisoned from 1989--1995 and was detained again in May 2003 along with Aung San Suu Kyi following the Depeyin incident. After serving time in Kalay Prison, he was placed under house arrest in February 2004.

U Tin Oo in Good Health But Requires Daily Meds

¶4. (C) Dr. Tin Moe Wai, a general practitioner by profession, cares for her husband's immediate medical needs.

She said he takes seven types of medication a day for ongoing conditions but is generally in good health thanks to daily exercise. She noted he needs vitamins, nutrition powder, and other daily medications. Previously she had received assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross, but that stopped due to low funding levels. She told us she has been able to obtain some medicine from the UK Embassy. The UK poloff confirmed to us that the UK Embassy has limited funds this year to provide assistance to U Tin Oo.

¶ 15. (C) Tin Moe Wai expressed nostalgia for the Khin Nyunt period, noting that when her husband needed a medical checkup then, she was able to call a designated point-of-contact, a captain, and the matter was resolved quickly. Now when U Tin Oo needs a medical checkup, Tin Moe Wai informs Special Branch, who must send the request to Nay Pyi Taw for approval. It takes at least a month for a reply.

Limited Contact with NLD Officials

¶ 16. (C) Dr. Tin Moe Wai told us she does not expect her husband will be released anytime soon. He is still interested in politics although she declined to share his views on the regime's "roadmap to democracy" and planned 2010 elections. Dr. Tin Moe Wai told us she is not politically active, but she maintains limited contact with NLD officials and attended the party's 20th anniversary event in September ¶ 2008. She was recently told by a "nice" Special Branch officer to be careful because her visits to the NLD are being monitored. Dr. Tin Moe Wai attended the NLD's January 4 Independence Day ceremony, during which NLD officials read a statement calling for the release of her husband.

RANGOON 00000008 002.2 OF 002

Assistance Request

¶ 17. (C) U Tin Oo's wife told us the NLD continues to provide the family with 5,000 kyats (approximately USD 4) per month for expenses. She requested the Embassy assist the couple's only son, who is living in Japan, to send U Tin Oo necessary medication. She also told us her husband is an avid reader who greatly appreciates the National Geographic and the Irrawaddy magazines.

Comment

¶ 18. (C) Although less high-profile than Aung San Suu Kyi, U Tin Oo was a founding member of the NLD and is held in great esteem by the party. Judging by Dr. Tin Moe Wai's description and based on the fact we could meet with her, the conditions of house arrest are less restrictive for her husband than for Aung San Kyi.

¶ 19. (C) As Burma's political prisoner population continues to grow, prisoners' families are experiencing increasing hardships. The loss of family income, the travel costs to visit prisoners incarcerated far from home and efforts to provide food and medicine to prisoners are taking a toll. The difficulty U Tin Oo has experienced in obtaining his medicine is just one example of this need. As the hardship on these families increases, we anticipate receiving more requests for assistance. We request clear Department guidance regarding the extent to which we can help these brave activists in a manner consistent with our diplomatic status and U.S. law.

DINGER